Pasture quality vital for summer

Maintain a consistent, even grazing height going into summer i.e. clumps are grazed into. Pasture quality has a big impact on summer production.

Increasing residues is not advisable, e.g.
- ungrazed leaves are less efficient at capturing sunlight and die before the next grazing, reducing feed utilisation and the amount of feed grown
- when it rains, dead plant material rots and is lost
- it increases the risk of facial eczema.

When cows graze to a lower residual after a period of higher residuals:
• pasture growth and persistence are reduced because pasture reserves for growth are depleted
• pasture plants have a reduced chance of survival, due to being grazed
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Cows going into summer promote vegetative tiller growth and regrass persistence.

• if the farm is prone to summer dry, N application coupled with longer rotations (27-30 days), will improve feed availability through late January and February.

Irrigated and summer ‘safe’ farms should:
• maintain pasture cover and maintain quality by keeping pre-graze and post-graze pasture at recommended levels
• continue to harvest a surplus by making small, light silage crops – reducing the chance of creating a feed shortage
• consider applying N during December, to ensure new tillers are vigorous going into summer.

For more information visit dairynz.co.nz/pasture

Other farms
• These farms should already be on summer rotation lengths and have a summer action plan in place.

Tracking herd reproduction

• Track early mating progress using your Fertility Focus Report from about week four of mating. Reasses buill requirements, in light of estimated 6-week in-calf rate performance.
• Re-check calf and heifer liveweight targets and involve graziers in a plan to achieve growth rate targets during summer and autumn. Use liveweight BV formula (mature cow liveweight x 500 + 200 x BW to customise weight-for-age targets for each age group (InCalf Book pg 42-44).
• Choose a pregnancy testing strategy based on your information needs. Decide maximum total length of mating (12 weeks). Accurate expected calving dates are essential for next season’s plans and can be obtained by early aged pregnancy testing. Contact your vet beforehand.
• Enter foetal aged pregnancy test records to get a detailed InCalf Fertility Focus Report. Review past performance and priorities, with advisor input, the areas to improve such as calving pattern and heifer rearing.
• For more information visit dairynz.co.nz/in calf

For more information visit the DairyNZ website dairynz.co.nz
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